BC COLLEGE AND INSTITUTE STUDENT OUTCOMES
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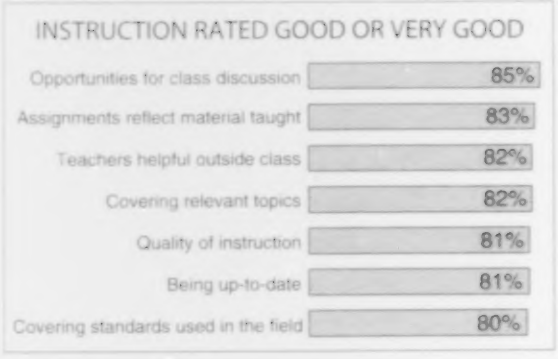
THE 2003 HIGHLIGHTS

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The BC College and Institute Student Outcomes Survey is an annual province-wide survey conducted with funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education and from BC's public colleges, university colleges, and institutes. In the spring of 2003, over 17,200 former post-secondary students were surveyed by telephone, 9–20 months after they left their educational program. They were asked to evaluate many aspects of their educational experience and to talk about their employment outcomes, further education, and personal development. Key findings from that survey are highlighted here.

FORMER STUDENTS GAVE THEIR PROGRAMS HIGH RATINGS

The former students surveyed were asked to rate their college, university college, and institute programs and courses using a number of criteria. Items relating to instruction and curriculum got particularly high marks—they were rated good or very good by a large majority of respondents.


INSTRUCTION RATED GOOD OR VERY GOOD
Opportunities for class discussion 85%
Assignments reflect material taught 83%
Teachers helpful outside class 82%
Covering relevant topics 82%
Quality of instruction 81%
Being up-to-date 81%
Covering standards used in the field 80%

As well, most former students thought that their programs helped them to develop skills and gave them opportunities for personal growth. In particular, respondents were most likely to report that their programs helped them to analyse and think critically (83 percent) and to work effectively with others (also 83 percent).

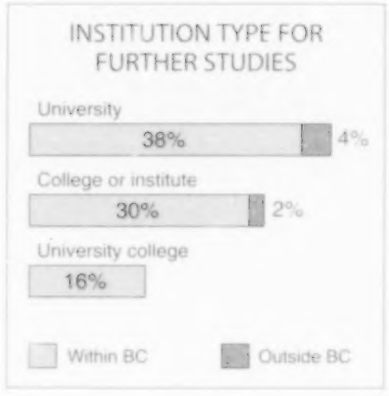
Half of the survey respondents were asked questions related to their personal development; of those, 79 percent said their educational experience had helped them improve their understanding of themselves, and 74 percent said it had helped them become clearer about their career or educational direction.

Questions about their institutions were directed at half the respondents: over three-quarters gave high ratings to such things as the condition of buildings, the institution's website, and a range of student services—with one exception: help finding employment. For 48 percent of those asked, this service was not available or not used. Of the remaining respondents, only 49 percent said the help they received finding a job was good or very good.

Almost all (91 percent) of the former students who were asked said they had experienced a study climate free from harassment or discrimination. A large majority also said that they had felt a sense of safety and security at night. Females were less likely to report this than males: 76 versus 85 percent.

ALMOST HALF OF THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS WENT ON TO FURTHER EDUCATION

At the time of the survey, 46 percent of those surveyed had taken some form of further education since they left their college, university college, or institute programs.



The rates of participation in further education varied according to the program that respondents last attended. Those from Arts and Sciences programs were by far the most likely to continue, at 74 percent; those from Business and Management programs, the next most likely, at 47 percent. Respondents among those least likely to pursue further studies were from Communications (20 percent) and Health-Related programs other than Nursing (22 percent).

Over half (58 percent) of the former students who undertook further studies did so at a university or university college. Almost a third (32 percent) continued studying at a college or institute. The remaining 10 percent took training through a variety of other institutions, including professional associations and private schools. Most of the respondents who went on with their education stayed in BC.

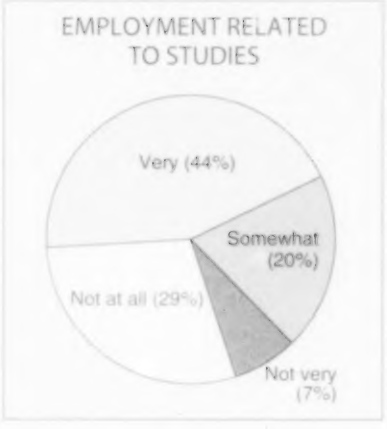
Of the respondents who took further education, 66 percent had expected to transfer credits from the program they left. Of those, 89 percent received the credits they expected, and 85 percent were satisfied or very satisfied with their transfer experiences.

THREE-QUARTERS OF FORMER STUDENTS WERE EMPLOYED

At the time of the survey, 74 percent of respondents were employed. Former Arts and Sciences students—the ones most likely to continue their education—had the lowest percentage employed, at 61 percent. At the top of the scale were former Nursing students and those from Health-Related programs—89 percent were employed.

Former Nursing students reported the highest monthly salary, with a median amount of $3,833 for a full-time job. The median full-time salary for all employed respondents was $2,500.

The majority of those employed said their program had been very or somewhat useful in getting their job and performing their job (76 and 73 percent respectively). Not quite as many (64 percent) said that their job was somewhat or very related to the training they received in their program.



The unemployment rate for survey respondents was 9 percent; that is, of those in the labour force (employed or looking and available for work) 9 percent were without a job.

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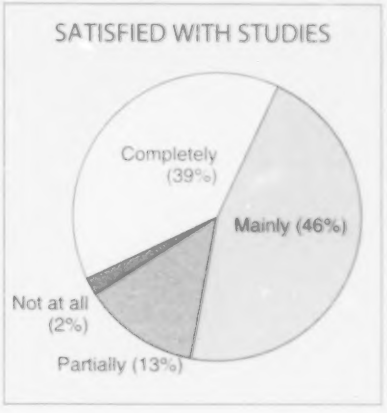
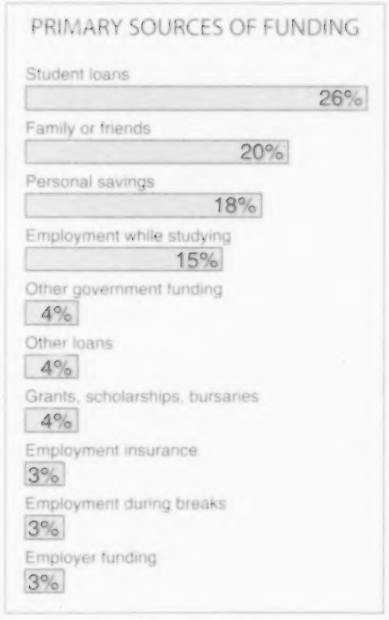
FORMER STUDENTS WERE SATISFIED WITH THEIR STUDIES

Overall, most former students were satisfied with their studies; in fact, barely 2 percent of those surveyed said they were "not at all" satisfied.



STUDENT LOANS ARE THE MOST-CITED SOURCE OF FUNDS

Half of the survey respondents were asked to identify their most important source of financial support while studying; 26 percent of those asked said they had relied on government student loans as their primary resource. Direct financial support from family or friends was also cited by a large percentage of respondents, followed closely by personal savings.

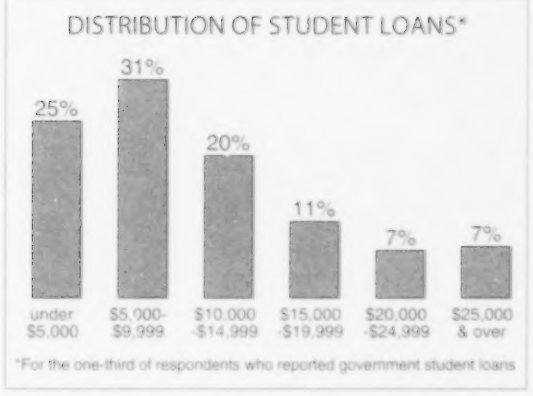


Of those who did not have student loans, the largest percentage (28 percent) said they relied on support from family or friends as their primary source of funds; 25 percent reported personal savings were their most important source.

Specific information on financial assistance was also solicited from half of the respondents. Of those former students, approximately one-third (34 percent) received a government student loan. Fifty percent of the respondents who reported their loan amounts borrowed $8,000 or less; 25 percent borrowed less than $5,000. On the other hand, 25 percent had accumulated student loans of $15,000 or more.

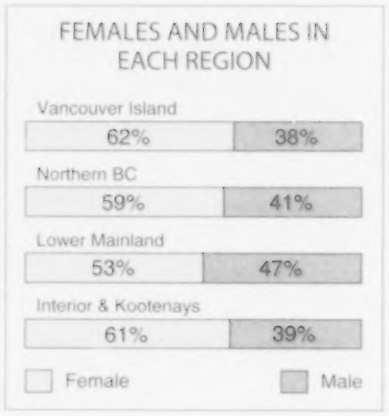
Former students who had been in 4-year programs had the highest student loans: $16,000 was the median amount borrowed; the median for those in 13- to 36-month programs was $10,000. To support their education, 17 percent of respondents had borrowed from sources other than government student loans. The median amount of this other debt was $3,000.

When they started their college, university college, or institute program, 9 percent of respondents were carrying debt from previous post-secondary education. The median amount of debt these former students carried over was $7,000.



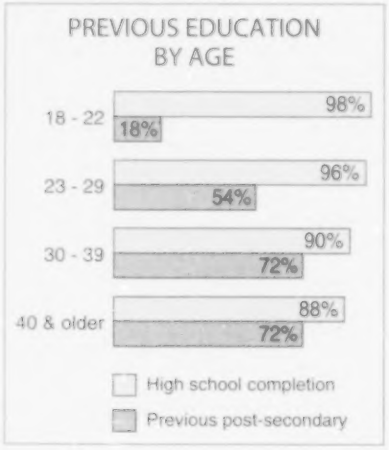
A MAJORITY OF FORMER STUDENTS WERE FEMALE AND HALF HAD TAKEN PREVIOUS POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

The majority (56 percent) of survey respondents were female. At the time of the survey, their median age was 26; the median age for males was 24. Five percent of those surveyed identified themselves as Aboriginal, and 5 percent said they had a long-term physical, mental, or health condition that limited the kind of activity that they could do.



The majority of respondents (63 percent) attended an institution in the Lower Mainland; 6 percent studied in Northern BC. Former students from Northern BC tended to be older—their median age was 28; 62 percent of those from Vancouver Island were female.

Most of the former students surveyed had finished high school—especially those who were under 30 at the time of the survey. Overall, 50 percent had taken some post-secondary education before their college, university college, or institute program. This percentage has risen steadily over the past five years, from 40 percent in 1998. Respondents who were older were much more likely to have taken previous post-secondary education.



Of the former students who had taken post-secondary studies, 56 percent had received previous certificates, diplomas, or degrees. The majority of these respondents had credentials from the trades or other non-university institutions; 39 percent, however, had earned university-level credentials.

MORE ABOUT THE SURVEY

The results of the BC College and Institute Student Outcomes Survey are used by colleges, university colleges, and institutes to improve programs and services. The Ministry of Advanced Education uses the information for policy evaluation and planning. Students, parents, and the general public can view students' outcomes through Opening Doors *(www.openingdoorsbc.com) to help them make informed choices for post-secondary education.*

The British Columbia Outcomes Working Group (OWG) oversees the survey project. The OWG is a long-standing partnership among the Ministry of Advanced Education, colleges, university colleges, institutes, and system-wide organizations, such as the Senior Academic Administrators' Forum, the Senior Educational Services Officers' Committee, and the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer.

For more information on BC student outcomes or to view the Highlights and other outcomes reports, please see http://outcomes.ceiss.org or visit the institutional research department of your college, university college, or institute.

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